



You may find it helpful to have a copy of the new AASL Standards for the 21st-Century Learner to refer to as you read this article. It is available at <http://www.ala.org/aasl/standards>

There is much buzz about the new AASL Standards, and while many of us are just trying to get our minds around the innovative Skills format and accompanying Dispositions, Responsibilities and Self-Assessment Strategies, I'd like to take a moment to direct your attention to the use of Community Outreach to achieve AASL's new and exciting information literacy goals.

First, let's review the four goals as outlined on page 3 of the printed standards. As professional SLMs, we should strive to help our students and ...

Learners use skills, resources and tools to:

1. Inquire, think critically, and gain knowledge
2. Draw conclusions, make informed decisions, apply knowledge to new situations, and create new knowledge.
3. Share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of our democratic society
4. Pursue personal and aesthetic growth.

When we look to these goals for connections with Community Outreach, our eyes immediately focus on **Goal #3, the sharing of knowledge ... ethically and productively as members of our democratic society.**

The skills outlined by AASL as necessary for students to achieve this goal include:

- 3.1.1 Conclude an inquiry based research process by **sharing new understandings** and reflecting on the learning.
- 3.1.2. **Participate and collaborate as members of a social and intellectual network** of learners.
- 3.1.3 Use writing and speaking skills to **communicate new understandings** effectively.
- 3.1.4 Use technology and other information tools to **organize and display knowledge and understanding in ways that others can view, use, and access.**
- 3.1.5 Connect learning to community issues.
- 3.1.6 Use information and technology ethically and responsibly.

I've taken the liberty of highlighting those skills which I feel can be significantly enhanced through community outreach, and while you can likely address all these within the confines of your school library media center, think of the experiences you could offer your students by working with other groups and at various locations. There are many ways you can use community outreach to help your students practice and develop the required dispositions and responsibilities associated with Goal #3. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Develop leadership and confidence by providing opportunities for students to present gained knowledge to individuals outside their usual peer group (teachers, parents, principal, etc)
- Encourage social responsibility through participation in and contribution to local community groups and issues

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- Develop teamwork and communication skills by allowing students to work with diverse groups of individuals
- Develop understanding and respect for different perspectives and varying interests and learn to seek a variety of viewpoints.

The list goes on and on and the potential is immense. Yet how do we manage to incorporate community outreach into our already hectic schedules? Many of you are already using various techniques successfully to 'push out the walls of your library media center.' For those of you who just don't know where to start, take a look at some success stories located in this month's ***Motivational Strategies***.

In our efforts to help students grow into responsible sharers of information and develop the skills necessary to "Contribute to the exchange of ideas within and beyond the learning community", the expansion of our resources and energies outside the walls of the school library can be an excellent way to demonstrate and encourage similar behavior. Reaching out to your extended community (parents, teachers, siblings, community services, etc) reinforces the idea of learning as a social context and provides additional opportunities for your students to both witness and participate in information sharing beyond their immediate peers. As such, community outreach can be a powerful tool for our students in the development of the skills necessary to become not only life-long learners, but productive and ethical contributors in a democratic, knowledge-sharing society.

About The Author



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